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THE DIVINE NAME IN EXODUS AS PROMISE AND FULFILLMENT

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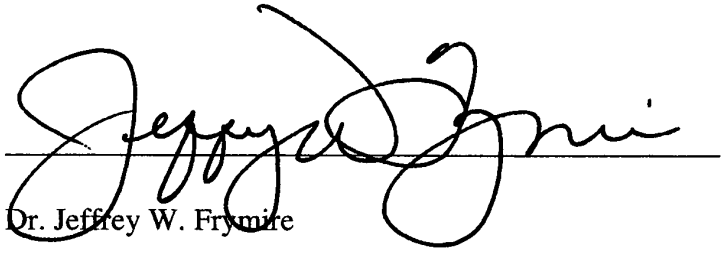

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Abstract

This thesis claims that Exodus as a whole (I employ the final form) is a rhetorical claim regarding the identity and character of God and His relationship to His people. The thesis builds upon my earlier statement that the pronouncement in Exodus 3, "I will be that which I will be," is expounded upon by the narrative, ritual, poetry, and law in Exodus 4-33 and then succinctly stated in Exodus 34:5-7: "YHWH is *El*, merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in lovingkindness and faithfulness," and justice.

Though the bulk of the thesis focuses on this primary rhetorical statement regarding the identity-character of God, it also briefly address the secondary rhetorical question, "Where is God?" presented by Exodus 1-2. This question is then answered in Exodus 35ff, "God is tabernacling with His people." As a subtle (and admittedly inferential) preface to answering this question, Exodus 35 also states where God was: God, as Israel's king, was partaking of a Sabbath, sitting upon His throne while creation flourished. Exodus then becomes an incarnational document: speaking of how the Supreme God upon His throne 1) heard the cry of the people, 2) promised to act on their behalf, 3) came down and worked through the acts, ritual, poetry, and laws of humanity, 4) succinctly stated the fulfillment of the promise, and finally 5) tabernacled amongst them.

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Lastly, I would like to thank Margaret Whibley from Benedict Books, my proofreader, or "Word Winnower," as she prefers. I could not have done what I have done without her.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Preview of the Subject

> God said to Moses: "I WILL BE THAT WHICH I WILL BE.... Say to the sons of Israel, 'I WILL BE sent me to you....' Say to the Israelites, 'YHWH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, sent me to you.' This is my name forever. This will be my living legacy to generation upon generation."[1]

More than simply a statement of identity, the self-revelation of the divine name in Exodus 3 was a promise. When Moses asked who God was, God cryptically answered that the God of Israel's forefathers would become known by demonstrations of character. This character of God's being would then come to define the divine name. The name would leave a legacy by which God would be remembered, a living legacy used not only for remembrance but also for invocation.[2]

Methods for the Book of Exodus

The book of Exodus gives an account of the true beginning of the Israelite community and faith.[3] It contains more beginnings than can be found in its ancient prequel now known as Genesis. In Exodus, God reveals a personal name and demonstrates the meaning of that name via

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[1] Exodus 3:14-15. The translation is my own.

[2] Andrew Bowling, "Zakhar", *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (TWOT)* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980) I.241-243.

[3] John Durham. *Word Biblical Commentary: Exodus* (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), xix.

actions: redeeming the people of Israel, judging the nation of Egypt, forming them into a peculiar people, establishing a covenant relationship with them, providing a legal code for righteous living, forgiving blatant sins of the people, and tabernacling amongst them.

This ancient and formative book has generated a number of methods of study, especially in the last few hundred years. Although the point of this thesis is not to demonstrate superiority of one method of study over another, I do wish to highlight several relevant methods prior to identifying the primary one I will be using throughout my research.

Two related forms of historical-critical studies of the Pentateuch are source criticism and redaction criticism. Both rightfully assume that the Pentateuch in its final form was composed from multiple sources and collected by one or more redactors. In terms of Exodus, three primary sources are frequently identified: the Yahwhist (J), Elohist (E), and Priestly (P) writers. Whereas source criticism attempts to identify which pericope belongs to which source in order to understand the historical situation surrounding the writing of each pericope, redaction criticism seeks to understand the motive of the redactor in piecing the final form together in the way that he or she does.

Both forms of historical-critical studies have their place in scholarly writing, and I in no way intend to diminish the importance of their influence on the study of Exodus. However, as my interest lies in the message of the final form of the text, this thesis will not enter into the discussion of which source might have written which pericope. Similarly, I operate under the assumption that a redactor compiled Exodus for a specific purpose—namely, to identify and expound upon the identity of God and the relationship God formed with Israel through the events of the Exodus—but my method does not focus on how each pericope is taken out of its original

historical context and placed into the book of Exodus. I will discuss further in the next section how redaction criticism influences my methodology and how I see a predominant theme of identity and relationship throughout the book.

Another early modern method for studying the Bible is form criticism. Prior to the Enlightenment, the primary "form" of all parts of the Bible was seen to be that of divine discourse.[4] Although other scholars contributed to the development of the new form criticism, Hermann Gunkel of Germany was primarily responsible for its rise to prominence. Rather than focusing on entire books as examples of divine discourse, Gunkel was interested in breaking the books up into their various pericopes to find the traditions behind them: traditions that included history, myths, legends, folk tales, and so forth. Each pericope would have its individual genre consisting of the same mood, style, and setting. Although form criticism has its merits, it is not my method of choice, as, again, my interest lies in the overarching theme of the final form of the book and how that fits into the metanarrative of Scripture as a whole.

Out of form criticism arose genre criticism. Genre criticism can have many different meanings in contemporary scholarship. Although it is often equated with form criticism, there are distinct differences. Whereas form criticism, like source criticism, attempts to find information about select pericopes outside of their immediate context, genre criticism is an exercise in interpreting entire collections of material by comparing them with other similar material. In doing so, the aim is to understand the nature, meaning, and significance of the text.[5]

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[4] Kenton Sparks, "Genre Criticism" in *Methods for Exodus*, edited by Thomas B. Dozeman (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 55

[5] Sparks, "Genre Criticism", 63.

In order to study Exodus using genre criticism, one would first compare it to the rest of the Pentateuch, then to other similar portions of the Hebrew Bible, and finally to other material written in the ancient Near East. I will discuss in the next section how I will be employing genre criticism in this thesis.

One last set of related methods for the study of Exodus that I will briefly discuss in detail is literary criticism[6] and the subsets of rhetorical criticism and narrative criticism. Literary critics, in general, study the Bible as literature. They read the text closely, paying careful attention to its literary elements, in order to ascertain its meaning and significance. Whereas historical critics tend to look for meaning "behind the text" with regard to the historical situation of the author and audience, literary critics tend to look for meaning within the text.

In one sense, rhetorical criticism is thus a subset of historical criticism, in that it studies an ancient text as the "event of communication"[7] in its ancient setting to determine the meaning of the text. Its interpretations are not meant to be timeless, but rather are meant to discover the meaning for a given historical context.[8] In another sense, rhetorical criticism is a subset of literary criticism in that it studies the literary units and patterns of a text inductively in order to figure out what this meaning is.[9]

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[6] For further information, see Dennis T. Olson's "Literary and Rhetorical Criticism" in Dozeman's *Methods for Exodus*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 13-54.

[7] Olson, "Literary and Rhetorical Criticism", 22.

[8] Olson, "Literary and Rhetorical Criticism", 24

[9] Olson, "Literary and Rhetorical Criticism", 22-24.

Rhetorical criticism as a subset of literary criticism is pragmatic in approach.[10] It focuses on how the ancient author achieved his or her intended purpose in relationship to a particular ancient audience. Its focus is primarily on persuasion. In relation to Exodus, a rhetorical critic may ask questions such as, "What is the author trying to convince his or her audience of?" or "How does the author persuade his or her readers to...?"

In contrast, narrative criticism does not focus primarily on the ancient author and how the author achieved his or her intended goals with an ancient audience. Rather, narrative criticism employs the concept of an implied reader in order to make the text itself the primary focus of study.[11] Furthermore, its primary focus is not on the act of persuasion within the literary unit but rather on the "story-as-discoursed."[12]

There are many other methods for studying the book of Exodus that do not relate to this thesis. I have briefly described source criticism and form criticism because of their respective relationships to redaction criticism and genre criticism. I have also gone into more detail about literary criticism and the subsets of rhetorical criticism and narrative criticism because I will be using these heavily within my thesis. Although liberation criticism is a popular method of study today, it does not affect how I read the book of Exodus, as Exodus does not promote the creation of an independent, liberated people but rather promotes trading corrupt leaders and masters (i.e. Egypt, Pharaoh, taskmasters) for good ones (i.e. God, Moses, Aaron). Likewise, I do not use Exodus to help me reconstruct history. Exodus of course contains historical information, but its

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[10] Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 11, 14.

[11] Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism*? 15, 19.

[12] Powell, What *is Narrative Criticism*? 23. Original quote comes from Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2980), 15-42.

primary purpose is not historiography. Rather, it uses history along with many other forms of writing in order to make its primary claim, one that is theological in nature.[13] Due the limitations of this thesis, I will not go into any more detail regarding other methods of study for the book of Exodus that I will not be employing. Instead, I will use the foundation above to move into the next section of this chapter regarding the methodology for this thesis.

Methodology for this Thesis

The aim of this thesis is to demonstrate what the book of Exodus says about the identity of God and the relationship God has with the people of Israel. To do so, I will closely examine the key passages of Exodus 3:13-15 and Exodus 34:5-7 and demonstrate how these together form an *inclusio* around the large unit of material that comprises most of Exodus 3-34. As such, my primary method of study is literary in nature.

Although my focus is on the text itself, rather than the historical situation that produced it, my approach will incorporate rhetorical criticism in addition to narrative criticism. Although Exodus includes story, its primary purpose, as discussed above, is theological. The implied audience of the book of Exodus is not someone who wants to read a good story, but rather someone who needs to be persuaded that the claims the book makes are true. Furthermore, Exodus in its final form simply does not make for a good narrative. If we want to understand the text in its final form, we must first understand the intent of the implied author. This intention is

[13] Durham, *Exodus*, xx.

not primarily to tell a story but rather to persuade the audience of the timeless truths contained in the book.[14]

In order to interpret the rhetorical claims made by the book of Exodus, this thesis will employ background studies that include genre criticism and redaction criticism. This is not an attempt to precisely identify the different forms used or the different sources responsible for them. Rather, this background material is essential in inductively ascertaining the overarching meaning of the text.

Statement of Thesis

This thesis claims that Exodus as a whole is a rhetorical document regarding the identity and character of God and the relationship God has with Israel. The statement regarding God's name in Exodus 3:14 is a rhetorical introduction to the main part of the book, in which God states, "I will be that which I will be." Exodus 3-33 expounds upon this statement using narrative, ritual, poetry, and law, all of which answer the rhetorical question, "What will God be?" Exodus 34 then succinctly states what God has demonstrated Himself to be: "YHWH is *El*, compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and faithfulness," and justice.

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[14] For more information regarding my decision to study the book of Exodus as rhetoric rather than narrative, see James W. Watts, *Reading Law: The Rhetorical Shaping of the Pentateuch* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 32-60.

In order to demonstrate such an overarching theme to the book of Exodus, this thesis consists of an introduction, three main chapters, and a conclusion.[15] This first chapter has thus far provided a brief introduction to the subject at hand, a brief history of methods for the study of Exodus, an explanation of the method used in this thesis, and finally this statement of thesis.

Chapter 2 focuses on an exegesis of Exodus 3:13-15. There I provide a translation of the passage and discuss various grammatical issues that have led to my interpretation. Of especial importance is the relationship between the divine name and the verb *haya*. I also discuss the significance of certain words as they relate to this thesis, especially how they relate to Exodus 34:5-7. A topical analysis of dialog between Moses and God during the call narrative is also included prior to concluding remarks for the chapter.

Chapter 3 consists of an exegetical study of Exodus 34:5-7. There I demonstrate how Exodus 34:5-7 serves as the closing *inclusio* for what began in Exodus 3:13-15, stating precisely the characteristics of God's nature that have been demonstrated throughout the book of Exodus. As with chapter 2, chapter 3 includes a translation, a discussion of various grammatical issues, a discussion of the significance of the attributes of God, and a topical analysis offering an alternative view of the concept of "generational curses."

Chapter 4 is the third main chapter of this thesis. There I focus on every pericope between Exodus 3 and 34 and demonstrate how each rhetorically persuades the reader to accept the definition of God's nature and relationship to Israel based on the material in the various genres of text. Given that I am dealing with the final form of the text, I have chosen to identify

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[15] The addendum planned to discuss the rhetorical purpose of Exodus 1-2 and 35-40 will more appropriately be addressed in a future work.

the pericopes based on their topics rather than on any particular criticism of the form. The divisions are based on my own literary interpretations of the final form of the text and are in no way an attempt to identify different historical settings in which they may have been written. Although I will demonstrate that the order of placement of the material helps the overall rhetorical effect of the book of Exodus, my intention is not to identify a particular historical setting for the redactor.

The fifth and final chapter is a conclusion to the thesis. There I provide a brief summary of the results of the thesis, suggest implications it has for Biblical studies, provide a few suggestions on areas of further study warranted by the thesis, and offer brief concluding remarks. As the bulk of the thesis focuses on this primary rhetorical statement regarding the identity of God, I am intentionally leaving room for a future addendum to briefly address the secondary rhetorical question, "Where is God in relation to Israel?" presented by Exodus 1-2. This question is finally answered in Exodus 35-40, "God is tabernacling with His people." As a subtle (and admittedly inferential) preface to answering this question, Exodus 35 also states where God was: God, as Israel's king, was partaking in a Sabbath, resting while creation was fruitful and multiplied. Exodus then becomes an incarnational document: speaking of how the supreme God upon the throne 1) heard the cry of the people, 2) promised to act on their behalf, 3) came down and worked through the acts, ritual, poetry, and laws of humanity, 4) succinctly stated the fulfillment of the promise, and finally 5) tabernacled amongst them. Although this will be addressed briefly in the conclusion, an addendum is planned for a later date.

Chapter Two

Exodus 3: The Divine Name as Promise

Introduction: The Subject of Exodus 3:13-15

Exodus 3:13-15 introduces the primary rhetorical claim of the book of Exodus. Before we look at this rhetorical claim, let us first look at the background surrounding it. At the beginning of this chapter, God appeared to Moses from within the iconic burning bush and spoke to him. During the encounter, God informed Moses that the cry of Israel's bondage had been heard and commissioned him to go into Egypt to free Israel from this oppression. When Moses asked, "Who am I?" thereby expressing doubts about his ability to fulfill the commission, God promised to be with him and provided a sign: Israel would return to the very mountain Moses was on and serve God there. Yet Moses still had doubts about God's ability, which brings us to the verses at hand.

Moses' next question, asking God, for a name became "Who are you?" Moses already knew that God was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but God had yet to provide any name in dialogue with Moses that would indicate identity and (more importantly) character. God responded with the mysterious statement, *ʾehyehʾašer ʾehyeh*, popularly translated, "I am who I am," although perhaps better translated as, "I will be that which I will be." God then told Moses to tell Israel *ʾehyeh* had sent him, prior to providing the presumably related name and title, *YHWH*, God of your fathers. Verse 16 concludes the statement of God's name by saying that this is both a name and what God will become known and remembered by. In this chapter I expound

upon this revelation of name not only as a statement of identity but, more importantly, as a promise of character.

Translation

13. Moses said to God, "Look. I am going to the sons of Israel, and I will say to them, 'The God of your fathers sent me to you,' but they will say to me, 'What is his name?' What should I say to them?"
14. God said to Moses: "I WILL BE THAT WHICH I WILL BE."[16] Then He said, "So say to the sons of Israel, I WILL BE sent me to you."
15. Then God again said to Moses: "So say to the sons of Israel, "YHWH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, sent me to you.' This is my name forever. This will be my living legacy to generation upon generation."

Exegetical Issues

Name – What's in a Name?

To understand the rhetorical effect of this passage, it is first important to understand the meaning of a name in the ancient world. A name in the ancient world was often not simply something one was addressed by. Rather, a name was symbolic, in that it reflected one or more of the following: 1) A desire by the name-giver that the named would have such attributes as represented by the name, 2) A desire by the name-giver to honor a deity by including a characteristic of the deity in the named's name, or 3) A characteristic of the named's actual

[16] The most literal translation would be, "I will be who/what I will be," as proposed by J. Gerald Janzen in *Exodus* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 34.

essence.[17] This third purpose was especially true when it came to name changes: Abram changed to Abraham, for he would indeed be the father of many. Jacob changed to Israel, for God truly would strive with/for him. In this context, *El* of Israel's forefathers changes to YHWH *El* of Israel's forefathers (more on this in the next section).

Here, Moses is not asking God what address he should use. Rather, Moses is asking, "Who are you? And what do you want to make known about Yourself?"[18] God's response likewise, rather than being "a mere form of address...would tell its own story about the divine nature and do so in a way immediately relevant, endlessly satisfying, and bafflingly enigmatic..."[19] The name of God would reveal the character of God; or, as the Jewish Study Bible puts it, God's nature would become evident through His actions.[20] It was immediately relevant because Israel was in Egypt, in slavery under an oppressive empire, and the people wanted to know if their God truly was capable of hearing their cries. It was endlessly satisfying because it left room for God to define Himself by His characteristics throughout the rest of the book. And finally, it was bafflingly enigmatic because, likewise, it left room to ponder what characteristics this God would reveal to His people.

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[17] A.S. Van der Woude, "šēm." *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament (TLOT)*, edited by Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997). III.1348-1367

[18] Cf. J.A. Motyer, *The Message of Exodus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 68; and J.A. Motyer, "Name," *NBD*, 799-802.

[19] Motyer, *The Message of Exodus*, 69.

[20] Jeffrey H. Tigay, *The Jewish Study Bible: Exodus (* New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 111

Purpose – What is the Purpose of Giving the Divine Name?

French author Bernard Renaud suggested that the primary purpose of the giving of the divine name in this context is to authenticate Moses' mission and to allow him to be the voice of God:

> L'élément le plus proche de ce contete, c'est bien sûr cette mission ; c'est pour pouvoir l'euthentifier que Moïse demande à Dieu de révéler son nom (Ex 3,13). La révélation du nom divin vaut comme garantie de cette mission, elle fonde l'autorité de Moïse et l'autorise à parler « au nom de YHWH ».[21]

According to the narrative, the theophany does indeed serve to commission Moses to go to Egypt to redeem the Israelites. However, rhetorically speaking, the revelation of the name has a double meaning. More importantly than functioning as a call narrative, this passage plays the role of a promise of assurance. Renaud quickly admitted this, suggesting that the name of YHWH promises that this deity is the same God who came before to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that this deity is now coming to redeem Israel from Egypt; and finally that this deity is the one who will take them on a journey spanning generations leading them to a land of milk and honey.[22] To draw an inference, Renaud's interpretation of the meaning of the name YHWH in relation to the imperfect verb "to be" would be: "I was, I am, and I promise I will always be coming to redeem my people."

Although coming from a different perspective, the late David Noel Freedman also argued that the full name of God was more than a statement of being, but also a promise of character.

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[21] Bernard Renaud, *« Proche est ton Nom » De la révélation à l'invocation du Nom de Dieu* (Paris, CERF Press, 2007), 23.

[22] Renaud, *Proche est ton Nom*, 27.

His analysis of the divine name throughout the First Testament postulated that YHWH Elohim was not a mixture of the Yahwhist and Elohist sources but rather a prose equivalent of the poetic YHWH El that is preserved eight times in the First Testament.[23] Freedman's assertion is that YHWH is a verb and should be interpreted as Hiphil with causative action, with the name of God having the rhetorical effect of 'God causes to be.' In the imperfect, this can be interpreted as 'God created, sustains, and will continue to do so.' However, he readily admitted that the Masoretes saw this as a Qal verb, with simple action, perhaps indicating, 'I was, I am, and I promise to be God.'[24]

In his analysis, Freedman also discussed how YHWH *El* is used as God's proper name in Exodus 34:6, which is explored further in the next chapter of this thesis. It is important to point out that Freedman considered that just as *El* traditionally had various epithets (*El Shaddai, El Elyon*, etc.), the passage in Exodus 34:6 effectively also has various epithets. The full name of God is thus YHWH *El*, with the characteristics listed in 34:6 as His epithets.[25] While he concludes by indicating that the action is causative, with the focus on God creating, I see no evidence from the text or historical tradition to indicate that this should not be interpreted in the Qal as simple action, indicating a stative verb. In Exodus 3, this stative verb is a promise to demonstrate what the character of God will be. The promise finds its fulfillment in Exodus 34, where this stative verb is a declaration of what God has shown His character to be. The

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[23] David Noel Freedman, "The Real, Formal, Full, Personal Name of God" in *Sacred History, Sacred Literature: Essays on Ancient Israel, the Bible, and Religion in honor of R.E. Friedman on his Sixtieth Birthday* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 82-83.

[24] Freedman, "The Real Name", 82.

[25] Freedman, "The Real Name", 88-89.

continued implication of the Qal imperfect is that God was, is, and always will be what He has demonstrated Himself to be.

Grammatical Analysis - ʾehyeh ʾašer ʾehyeh in relation to YHWH

In 3:14, Moses receives the enigmatic answer regarding the name of God: *ʾehyeh ʾašer ʾehyeh*, which I have already proposed should be translated "I will be that which I will be." Both times the verb *haya,* "to be," appears in the Qal imperfect, first-person-common-singular form of the verb. The Qal indicates simple action where the primary subject is performing the action with no secondary subject implied.[26] As *haya* is a verb of being, the verb is stative, describing the state or quality of the subject.[27] The imperfect tense may best be interpreted as future in this context of promise.[28] However, it is important to note that in the context of authenticating the call of Moses this can also legitimately be interpreted as progressive.[29] God describes God's name—His essence or character—as an ongoing state of being. It is a promise that God's character as demonstrated will continue to be demonstrated. In the immediate context, this refers to a God who seemingly has been far off but currently is near. It refers to a God who responds to the cry of His people. In the broader context of the book of Exodus as a whole, this is God Most High who is merciful, gracious, patient, loving, and faithful, yet who remains just in judging the stubbornly unrighteous.

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[26] Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide To Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 37.

[27] Arnold & Choi, *A Guide*, 38.

[28] Arnold & Choi, *A Guide*, 58.

[29] Arnold & Choi, *A Guide*, 58-59.

After responding with *ʾehyeh ʾašer ʾehyeh*, God again says to Moses, speaking in his own voice, "*ʾehyeh* has sent me to you." "I will be" remains a self-reference by God in the second half of 3:14. Then in 3:15, God tells Moses how to refer to him, as YHWH. Many, if not most, scholars agree that YHWH in its truest form should be treated as a verb. Likewise, many agree that the name is related to the verb *haya*, meaning 'to be.' Rather than rebuilding the tabernacle and presenting a new case on how this verb should be interpreted, I will instead refer again to the work of David Noel Freedman in his study of the Tetragrammaton:

> If the Tetragrammaton is a verb, then it must be parsed as a third-masculine-singular prefix or imperfect form of a root originally *HWY --> *HWH --> HYH, meaning 'to be', 'become', or 'come to pass'. The prefix from may be translated as a future tense or, in the particular vocalization of the name *Yahwēh*, as a jussive or a preterite form. [Regarding] [t]he conjugation of the verb form[,] [t]he choice here is either Qal or Hiphil. In the Hebrew Bible, the Masoretes recognized a Qal form (that is, a simple tense) but not a Hiphil (that is, a causative form). Neverless, it has been argued (and I think correctly) that a causative form of this verb can be assumed for the Bible. If the form is a verb, then it will contain both the verb and the pronoun subject [...] [Regarding] the noun subject implied by the pronoun[,] [...] it is most likely that the unnamed deity is El, the chief god of the Canaanite pantheon.[30]

Freedman's analysis adeptly demonstrated the relationship between *haya* and YHWH. Based on his essay, I would fully agree that YHWH in its truest sense is a statement of God's being. It is a third-masculine-singular imperfect verb with the implied pronoun of YHWH being El, God Most High. This is more explicitly stated in Exodus 34:6, which I will discuss in the next chapter.

What Freedman failed to do, however, is take into account the passage where this word most clearly is indicated as a verb. Freedman suggested it is possible that the verb is a Hiphil,

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[30] Freedman, "The Real Name", 82

indicating God "causes to be," which would make this passage specifically a reference to YHWH-El as creator rather than simply "the god of your father," a generic term for any deity.[31] The Hiphil is indeed possible, based on a grammatical analysis of the consonants alone.

Yet just because something is possible does not mean that it is actually true. The Masoretes felt that in this context the verb was a Qal, which also stands up to a grammatical analysis of the consonants alone. For the purposes of this argument, I will refer to the Masoretic interpretation of the Qal as the "rule" and Freedman's interpretation of the Hiphil as the "exception," given that the Masoretic interpretation has both stood the test of time and is based in the "default" form of the word.

When an exceptional interpretation goes against the rule, it is important to ask two questions: is the exception possible? And is the exception necessary?[32] Freedman's analysis, in part copied above, adequately demonstrates that the exception is possible. YWHW could indeed be a Hiphil imperfect form of the verb, indicating YHWH is a reference to the High God *El* as Creator. But Freedman does not deal with the question, "is this exception necessary?" In looking at the context, the writer of this passage clearly links *ʾehyeh* to YHWH. For all practical purposes, they are synonymous in their functioning in verses 14b and 15. 14b says, "Tell them *ʾehyeh* sent me to you," and 15 likewise says, "Tell them YHWH sent me to you."

ʾehyeh is, without argument, a Qal imperfect, first-common-singular form of the verb. It is a reference by God to His essence: "I will be" or "I am being." In this context, it is not

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[31] J. Gerald Janzen, *Exodus* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1997), 32.

[32] R. L. Moberly, "Protoevangelium redivivum? Reflections on recent interpretations of Gen 3:15" presented at *S18-318 - Genesis: Genesis and Interpretation* at the Society of Biblical Literature annual conference (Chicago, Nov 18, 2012).

necessary to change the parallel implication of YHWH unless God wanted to convey some sort of different meaning to the word, and there is nothing in the context that indicates this is the case. Given that there is no indication that the Qal *'ehyeh* could be interpreted causatively, there is no reason to believe that YHWH should be interpreted causatively. Although grammatically speaking, YHWH could possibly be Hiphil if no markers were present, looking at the immediate context demonstrates a clear parallel between *'ehyeh* and YHWH. *'ehyeh* is a first person reference to God by Himself, and YHWH is a third person reference by Moses to God.

Easy to Miss – The Meaning of Zeḵer

"This is my name forever. This will be my living legacy to generation upon generation." In this verse, the NRSV translates the Hebrew word *zeḵer* as "title." Slightly better, the JPS translates this word as "appellation." Although this word plays just a small role in the meaning of the passage, it is worth discussing why I have chosen to translate it as "living legacy."

The word in its most basic meaning denotes "remembrance" or "memorial."[33] Although the NASB appropriately translates this instance as "memorial-name," a native English speaker could easily confuse with the name a person is remembered by after he or she is dead. In this passage, God is making a promise to be YHWH. The material between Exodus 3 and 34 contains various acts of God that demonstrate mercy, grace, patience, love, faithfulness, and justice. In these acts, God is defining His character, or more literally, "that which He will be." These acts are not one-time events by which Israel could remember Him. Rather, they are character-

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[33] *BDB* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1997), 271

defining traits that show who God is and what God promises to always be. Inasmuch, "living legacy" connotes this much better than "title," "appellation," or "memorial."

Topical Analysis: The Dialogue of the Call of Moses

A study of this passage where God most prominently reveals His name to Moses would not be complete without looking at the call narrative surrounding it. As I have already provided a brief overview of the background in the introduction to this chapter, I will focus particularly on the recurrence of interrogation[34] present throughout 3:11-4:17 in order to get a larger picture of the context surrounding the revealing of God's name.

As demonstrated in the table below, Moses raises an objection to his call based on his doubt four times, and four times God answers with assurance, stating either in the first person (*'ehyeh* with you/your mouth) or in the third person (YHWH sent you). Each objection receives an equal response: When Moses doubts himself, God promises to be with him. When Moses doubts God, God promises that His faithful nature would be fully revealed in the events to come. When Moses doubts others, God promises that the others will believe in the name YHWH. When Moses doubts his abilities, God reassures him that the abilities are a gift from God. And in each of these instances, God promises, "I will be," with the exception of the third person reference to YHWH in 4:2-9, "He will be."

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[34] In terms of Inductive Bible Study, interrogation is simply "the employment of a question or a problem followed by its answer or solution." It has no hostile connotations as in popular American crime shows. For more detail on Inductive Bible Study, see David R Bauer and Robert A Traina, *Inductive Bible Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011). This particular phrase and the quote in this footnote, may be found on pp. 113-114.

Finally, when all his objections were answered and no doubt remained, Moses simply exclaimed, "My master, please send someone else!" (The Hebrew is much more subtle, "Pardon me, [my] Lord. Please send by hand whomever you send," although this is an outright refusal to act on God's calling nonetheless.)[35] Note here that Moses does not address God by name, YHWH. Most English translations rightfully translate this as "Lord" in lower case letters, although I have chosen to use "Master" to heighten the contrast. In response to Moses' lack of obedience, God gets angry, yet in His anger He remains patient, a preview of His characteristic of letting his anger burn slowly as described in 34:6. Since Moses has refused to perform God's call, God must make a slight change in His plans to accommodate the stubbornness of humanity.[36] He will still send Moses, but He will allow his brother to accompany him. And even in this instance, he promises again, *ʾehyeh* with your mouth.[37]

Doubt Expressed	**Moses Question/Problem**	**YHWH's Answer/Solution**
Doubting Self	Who am I? (3:11)	***ʾehyeh*** with you. (3:12)
Doubting God	Who are you? (3:13)	***ʾehyeh ʾašer ʾehyeh, YHWH*** (3:14-15)
Doubting Others	What if they don't believe me? (4:1)	"They will believe **YHWH** sent you based on these signs. (4:2-9)
Doubting Gifts	My mouth is heavy (4:10)	***ʾehyeh*** with your mouth. (4:11-12)
No More Doubt	Master, please send someone else (4:13)	(Angry): Aaron will help you, but ***ʾehyeh*** with your mouth. (4:14-17)

Table 1

[35] Bruckner, "Exodus", 51.

[36] Tigay, *Exodus*, 112.

[37] Bruckner, *Exodus*, 51.

Conclusion

As I conclude this chapter, there are several things to keep in mind as we move on to the study of Exodus 34:5-7. First, YHWH is directly related to *ʾehyeh*. As Freedman pointed out, it comes from the third-masculine-singular-imperfect form of the word "to be." As the Masoretes pointed out, like *ʾehyeh*, YHWH is Qal imperfect. This denotes a simple state of being in this context, "I will be that which I will be."

Secondly, Exodus 3:13-15 is more than an indicative revelation of what God used as an address. More importantly, Exodus 3:13-15 is a revelation of promise in order to authenticate a call. God will become known by the characteristics He demonstrates throughout the book. These characteristics will then be summed up as God being merciful, gracious, patient, loving, faithful, and just.

Finally, applicable not only for this study, but also for our own lives, it is important to remember that God can overcome any objection, fear, or doubt regarding our ability to follow His call. His assurance is the same: "I will be with you; I will continue to be what my actions have demonstrated me to be; your audience will know that I-who-am-these-things sent you; and I will bless you with gifts to enable you to complete your calling." In the case where we simply refuse to follow our calling alone, God is willing to slightly alter his plan (as we will again see in chapter 4) in order to make sure we fulfill our calling.

Chapter Three

Exodus 34: The Statement of Fulfillment and Repetition of Promise[38]

Introduction: The Subject of Exodus 34:5-7

Exodus 34:5-7 contains the most noteworthy theophany of the entire Hebrew Bible. In it YHWH reveals Himself to Moses visually and audibly, proclaiming both His name and who He is. As a result of the encounter, the covenant is restored, and Moses' face is filled with the light of God, radiant so that all will know that what comes from the unveiled mouth of Moses comes from the very mouth of God.

Despite being the most noteworthy theophany of the entire Hebrew Bible, Christian commentators have paid little attention to this passage.[39] The passage plays a prominent role in Hebrew theology: not only is it quoted at least eight times through the rest of the Hebrew Bible[40] and referenced in many other passages,[41] but it is also chanted during almost every Jewish

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[38] Chapter 3 is based on Jeremiah K. Garrett's "The Theophany of Mercy and Justice" in *Exegetical Studies in the Pentateuch* (Orlando: Asbury Theological Seminary, 2012).

[39] Donald E. Gowan, *Theology in Exodus: Biblical Theology in the Form of a Commentary* (Louisville Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 235.

[40] Num 14:18; Neh 9:17; Ps 86:15; 103:8; 145:8; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nah 1:3. John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark Chavalas, *IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2000), 34:6-7

[41] Kaiser, Walter Jr., "Exodus" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), Exodus 34:4-7.

reading of the Torah with the exception of Sabbath readings, which enact it.[42] Only four theophanies reveal the Divine Name, and this is the longest one,[43] indicating its importance. This passage thus reveals the word of God from the mouth of God regarding the nature of God.

Translation

5. Then YHWH came down as a cloud, and (Moses)[44] stood with him there, and (YHWH)[45] called out with[46] the name: "YHWH!"

6. Then YHWH passed before him and called out:

"YHWH! YHWH is *El*[47] compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and great of lovingkindness and faithfulness,

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[42] Sarna, Nahum, "Exodus" in *The JPS Torah Commentary*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 216.

[43] R. W. L. Moberly, *The Old Testament of the Old Testament: Patriarchal Narratives and Mosaic Yahwism* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 15.

[44]R. W. L Moberly, *At the Mountain of God: Story and Theology in Exodus 32-34* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1983), 85-86.

[45] Moberly, *At the Mountain*, 85-86.

[46] The *bet* preposition is being interpreted as a manner of specification per Bill T. Arnold and John H. Choi, *A Guide to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2003), 104. "The Name" specifies the preceding verbal notion that would otherwise be ambiguous. "The Name," particularly "YHWH!" is specifically what is said.

[47] I am intentionally leaving *El* untranslated to convey the meaning established in chapter two. I will expound upon it further in this chapter.

7. "keeping lovingkindness indefinitely,[48] bearing[49] iniquity[50] and rebellion[51] and sin, yet certainly not letting it go unpunished, counting[52] the iniquity of fathers against[53] (their) sons and against (their) sons' sons, against the third and fourth generations.

Exegetical Issues

Verbal Subjects - Who Performed each Action? [54]

Perhaps the most confusing exegetical issue in this passage is the subject of each of the verbs in 34:5. The writer employs three verbs but only uses the subject YHWH in a clear, direct relationship to the first verb. Without a doubt it is YHWH who descends as a cloud, but the text is rather ambiguous as to who does the standing and who does the calling.

A surface reading of the text would lead the reader to conclude that as YHWH is the only clear antecedent, YHWH must be the subject of all three verbs. Yet the formula *qara' b^e^shem YHWH* is a formula typically used for humans calling out to God, not of God calling out with his

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[48] Literally "to thousands" - as a substantive adjective, this word is taken to mean "extreme" and in terms of God "indefinitely." Jack B Scott, "'elep", *TWOT* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980) I.48.

[49] cf. 19:4

[50] This word refers to both the wrongful act and the punishment for the wrongful act. Bruce K Waltke, "'awon", *TWOT* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980) II.650-651.

[51] Herbert G. Livingston, "Pasha'", *TWOT* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980), II.741-742.

[52] Interpreted as "to number" Victor P. Hamilton, "paqad", *TWOT*, (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980), II.731-732. (Note: article "paqad" is unsigned. It has been assumed Hamilton is the author based on his signature at the end of a series of unsigned articles.)

[53] Interpreted as an adversative use of the preposition in order to make the phrase "count against" into commonly understood English. Arnold and Choi, *Guide*, 123.

[54] Material in this section relies heavily on Moberly's critical exegesis of the passage at hand in *On the Mountain of God*, 85-86.

own name. That leaves the reader to question who is standing with whom? Is Moses standing with God? Or is God standing with Moses? Or could it be intentionally ambiguous with the subject of the verb "to stand" not having any exegetical significance? To answer these questions we should look at the preceding context in which the theophany is itself promised: Exodus 33:12-23.

At the end of the golden calf story, Moses is once again questioning God's identity, although this time it appears to be out of a desire to know God, not to doubt God, as was the case in Exodus 3. God has told Moses to bring the people to Himself, which he has done, and now Moses is wanting God to fully reveal Himself as emphasized in his entreaty to "show me your ways" (33:13). God replies in 33:17 that He will do as Moses asks and provides him with a step-by-step plan of how this will be done. In 33:19, God promises on His part: "I will make my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name: "YHWH!" And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and I will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." Moses' part of the bargain is simple: "stand on the rock" (33:21). The verbs here in 34:5 are an immediate and simple fulfillment of the promises of 33:19, 21: God descends, Moses stands with God on the rock, and God proclaims the name: "YHWH!" God then goes on to describe His grace and mercy and those to whom He will grant it.

Based on the immediately preceding context, it is necessary to grant a second exception to the *qara' b^{e}shem YHWH* formula, the first being in 33:19. YHWH is indeed making an exceptional demonstration by calling out His own name, and the writer likewise is making an exceptional use of a formula that is elsewhere exclusive to humanity's invoking the name of YHWH. If we are to continue to interpret 34:5-7 as a fulfillment of 34:19, 21, our only option for

the second verb, "to stand," is Moses. While not apparent during a surface reading by one whose native language is not ancient Hebrew, this interpretation in light of the preceding context would have been the only one that made sense to the original native Hebrew audience.

> YHWH came down, Moses stood with Him there, and YHWH called out with the name: "YHWH!"

Variations of the Text - The Rhetorical Importance of the Masoretic Texts

Given the extreme importance that this passage has held in Jewish traditions over the years, it has been well preserved. We have record of only a single set of variants. The difference is minor, yet it can be interpreted as extremely important within the Hebrew and Christian communities. The difference lies in the number of times the name YHWH is present in verse 6. Whereas most of the texts include YHWH three times, the LXX traditions only include it twice. Based on the parallel passage of Exodus 3:13-15 and on the near-unanimous agreement amongst the textual witnesses, the argument for the validity of the text with YHWH stated by God twice consecutively as found in the MT is the most sound.

The importance of this repetition is three-fold. Although not exegetically significant, the first reason the repetition is significant is because of the way the Christian community has found ways to discover Trinitarian references within the Hebrew Bible. As translated and as argued above, the Divine Name is spoken three times by YHWH in this passage: first when He descends unto Moses and announces His presence, and the second and third time here in 34:6 when announcing His character. Let me be clear: while I do not consider that the intention of the writer of Exodus was to promote a Trinitarian theology, it is important for scholars to recognize how popular culture may appropriate a text beyond its original exegetical significance.

Secondly, for the Hebrew community the double word is extremely emphatic. This is similar to a nominative absolute,[55] except rather than having a noun *casus pendens* followed by a pronoun as the subject of the sentence, we have a noun *casus pendens* followed by the same nominative proper noun that serves as the subject of a verbless sentence. This emphatic relationship in essence makes the focal marker doubly strong, indicating the unmistakable identity of YHWH whose nature is to be described in the rest of the sentence.

The third and final reason the MT's rendition is of considerable importance is its relationship to YHWH's first theophany to Moses in Exodus 3. Although there is ample debate about whether the Divine Name truly is related to the verb *haya*, I believe I have adequately demonstrated the relationship in the context of Exodus 3 in the previous chapter. Regardless, the purpose of the immediate study is to note parallels between the two theophanies, not to further argue for the relationship between the two words. God's initial response to Moses when Moses challenged him to identify Himself was to say "*ʾehyeh ʾasher ʾehyeh*," repeating the imperfect verb "to be" twice. He then instructed Moses to tell Israel, "*ʾehyeh* has sent me to you," repeating it a third time, and then clarifying in 3:15 that this *ʾehyeh* is directly equivalent to YHWH, the God of the fathers. In essence, YHWH first predicted His nature with the double *ʾehyeh ʾasher ʾehyeh* ("I will be that which I will be") and then stated that He will be YHWH, the redeemer of Israel and the God of the fathers.

In the passage at hand, YHWH again speaks the divine name three times, this time in inverse order of the previous theophany, creating a chiastic *inclusio* with it. YHWH first announces the divine name in 34:5 to state who He is when he descends to Moses and announces

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[55] Arnold and Choi, *A Guide*, 7.

His presence. In 34:6 YHWH repeats the Divine Name twice in order to identify His nature. This is inversely parallel to YHWH predicting first His nature ("I will be that which I will be") in 3:14a and then stating that this nature is his Name in 3:14b. Moses already knows the name YHWH; that was revealed in Exodus 3. The character of YHWH however, that which YHWH would reveal Himself to be, has not yet been vocalized, and the theophany here is where YHWH announces His nature—that which He is—as He had demonstrated through the events between the two theophanies.

The promise is made in 3:14a: "I will be that which I will be!"

The fulfillment is revealed in 34:6f:

> I AM YHWH! I AM *EL*, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and great of lovingkindness and faithfulness, keeping lovingkindness indefinitely, bearing iniquity and rebellion and sin, yet certainly not letting it go unpunished, counting the iniquity of fathers against their sons and against their sons' sons, against the third and fourth generations.

Meaning of Key Words and Phrases

As stated in the introduction, this is the most noteworthy theophany of the entire Hebrew Bible, yet Christian commentators have consistently paid little attention to this passage, especially when it comes to analysing the words used. Many are well-known, though complex, words. Perhaps the commentators felt that footnote references were sufficient resources towards which to direct pastors, students, and lay leaders. I beg to differ, holding the view that not to provide an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of God mentioned here is to miss an important point—perhaps even the primary point—of the entire book of Exodus. It is towards these words in the context of this passage that I now turn my attention.

El – God Most High

The point of this study is to focus on what these words mean in this context, not to do an etymological study of each of the words. Therefore I will not go into detail regarding the disputed etymological nature of this word. What I will do, however, is look at why this word is used in contrast to the word *ʾelohim*.

ʾelohim is used over 2500 times in the First Testament,[56] with *El* used just over 200 (only seven times in Exodus[57]), many of those times with epithets such as *El Shaddai*.[58] While in this case epithets are not directly employed, it can be said that the following list of words serves in a way as a long epithet of attributive characteristics particular to the Hebrew deity. This is emphasized by the complete lack of verbs other than YHWH in 34:6.

While *El* was a common term for a deity in the ancient Near East, it was not simply a generic term. It was generally the term for either a supreme deity or for a personal deity.[59] As I demonstrated in chapter 2 in conjunction with David Noel Freedman's studies, the supremacy of

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[56] Stephen F. Noll, "Elohim", *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis (NIDOTTE)* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997) I.396-397.

[57] Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, and Johann Jakob Stamm, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT)* translated and edited under the supervision of M.E.J. Richardson (Leiden: Brill, 2000) I. 48

[58] Jack B Scott, "'el", *TWOT* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980) I.41-45.

[59] Scott, "'el", I.41-45.

YHWH here is being established by equating YHWH with God Most High: *El*.[60] In addition, the personal nature of God is being emphasized by likening YHWH to the "God of your fathers" (Ex 3:15). In this passage, there is no reference to the "God of your fathers," thus leaving *El* to denote the supreme god while allowing the rest of these traits to serve as an epithet giving God Most High qualities only an immanent deity could have. Thus we have a personal encounter with Moses, after solving a personal problem with the people of Israel, in which God Most High reveals His most personal nature.

Looking at these ideas in conjunction, the reasonable conclusion is that *El* is a personal term that is "qualified by words or descriptions which further define" the nature of the one whom this word is being attributed to.[61] By using the word *El* in the self-revelation, God is revealing Himself as a personal deity who remains supreme, laying out his personal traits as epithets, and subtly contrasting these traits to those of other Canaanite deities.

Raḥum - Compassionate

The first characteristic of this personal deity is that He is compassionate. This form of the word is only used of God in relation to his love for humans.[62] It comes from the word for

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[60] "God Most High" is specifically *El ʾelyon,* but it is common knowledge that *El* was the high god of the Canaanite pantheon. Rather than confusing the issue by suggesting that YHWH is the same entity as the supreme god of the Canaanite pantheon—a far-off, almost deistic god that had little-to-no interaction with humanity—I instead use the term "God Most High" here to refer to YHWH as the supreme being responsible for creation while allowing for the obvious immanent interaction He has with His people.

[61] Scott, "'el", I.41-45.

[62] *BDB*, 337.

"womb" and refers to a deeply emotional connection between a mother and her child.[63] It refers to God having a "soft place" in his 'heart' towards those he has compassion on.[64] This emotion is bent on a particular action, and in the context of the passage under discussion, that action seems to be to have mercy.

Ḥannun - Gracious

Grace is a concept that is easily misunderstood in Christian communities, and as such graciousness is a trait of God that we often fail to understand. Again this form of the word is only used to describe God.[65]

Grace is a gift offered by God who sees a need in humanity and fills it.[66] Yet the point of filling this need is not simply to give a gift, but rather to fill a purpose. *The Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* sets out the pre-eminent theme of the "Narrative Theology of Grace."[67] In it the writers provide numerous examples of God giving humanity grace: creation, a helpmate, clothing, protection, descendants, land, and so on. All of these gifts serve a specific purpose. They enable humanity to fulfill the purpose that God has for them: a purpose to take care of the world and to take care of their neighbor. God's graciousness empowers Israel to do this, and

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[63] Leonard J. Coppes, "raham", *TWOT,* (Chicago: Moody Bible Institute, 1980), II.841-843.

[64] H. J. Stoebe, "rḥm", *TLOT* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997) III.1225-1230

[65] *BDB*, 2587.

[66]Elaine A. Heath, "Grace", *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch (DOT:P)* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 372.

[67] Heath, "Grace" in *DOT:P*, 372-374.

God's grace exemplified in mercy enables Israel to continue serving as priests within this world, even in light of their failure to do so in the past.

ʾerekh ʾappayim - Slow to Anger

The phrase for "slow to anger" consists of two words with an odd literal meaning, "long of nose,"[68] that make for an interesting figurative meaning. The nose, due to the nostrils flaring when angry, is a well-known Hebrew euphemism for anger.[69] *ʾerekh* comes from the verb "to be long,"[70] usually referring to a length of time. At first glance one might interpret this to mean that God remains angry for a long period of time. This interpretation would not be out of place in the preceding context in 32:10 where God asked Moses to leave Him alone so that His wrath could burn hot. It also would not be out of place in the context in Exodus 4 where God got angry with Moses, yet remained patient and altered His plan to allow Moses to still complete it.

When used as an adjective construct with emotions, the word usually has more positive connotations. It refers to "patien[ce] of spirit" or "slow[ness] to anger."[71] It means that God "takes long to become angry."[72] The idea of a long nose, when used with God's compassion, is that God's "nose becomes long, so long in fact that it would take forever to burn completely."[73] As we saw in Exodus 4, although God became angry with Moses, He did not let His anger burn

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[68] Victor P. Hamilton, "'arak", *TWOT,* 162.

[69] Hamilton, "'arak", *TWOT,* 162

[70] *BDB*, 748.

[71] *BDB*, 750.

[72] David L. Thompson, "'arak", *NIDOTTE*, I.510-511

[73] Hamilton, "'arak", *TWOT,* 162

completely, resulting in Moses' destruction. Rather, He blessed Moses with a companion to aid in his calling.

Perhaps this should be interpreted as God becoming righteously angry, given the preceding context of God's wrath in Exodus 32-33, the preceding event of capital judgement, and the following verse speaking of God's judgement. Yet the idea is that this anger is stifled by compassion. God does not judge based on the anger, but rather allows the anger to fade out before burning completely, allowing His compassion to take over and allowing Him to give mercy where He pleases and judge the guilty based on their sin, not based on His emotion. Furthermore, given the preceding context, He at least allows us, potentially even invites us, to be in His presence while He is angry, allowing us to soothe the wrath by being the intercessors He has called us to be.[74]

Rav-Ḥesed - Great Lovingkindness

The adjective *rav*, translated "great," literally means "many" or "much."[75] It generally has a quantitative meaning, i.e. "numerous."[76] It has an implication of "excess."[77] In our context, it is not simply sufficient for God to have mercy. Instead, God's lovingkindness is abundant and overflowing, not only allowing Him to have mercy on the individuals responsible, but allowing Him to have mercy on all of creation on account of this lovingkindness.

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[74] Cf Exodus 32:10

[75] *BDB*, 912-913.

[76] *BDB*, 912-913.

[77] *BDB*, 912-913.

The term lovingkindness is one of the most complex terms in the Hebrew language. Entire monographs have been written trying to define this single word.[78] The nuances cannot receive justice in a single page or even a single dictionary entry. However, a brief summary will shed a small amount of light on the vast significance of this term.

The term *ḥesed* is used to help add nuance to the concept of grace in the First Testament. It is grace given through familial bonds and has connotations that extend from a king enabling a servant to complete a task through a gift to a "committed, familial love" that goes beyond any social expectations, duties, or shifting emotions. It is not simply an emotional inclination, but rather is emotion exemplified by action. It has nothing to do with the recipient of the grace earning a reward, but rather has to do with the actions of the giver unconditionally and with great pleasure giving what cannot be earned.[79]

The word is translated in numerous ways, including "loyalty," "faithfulness," "goodness," "steadfast love," or "kindness."[80] All of these tied together show the graciousness of God by always loving, being faithful and good, regardless of whether or not the objects of God's lovingkindness deserve such actions based on such dispositions. In essence, *ḥesed* is a concept that can summarize all of the attributes in this verse and more in a single Hebrew word and do so with an "unrelenting" force.[81]

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[78] Laird Harris, "ḥsd" *TWOT, 305-307,* lists the following abbreviated examples: Nelson Glueck (1927); I. Elbogen (c. 1927) W.F. Lofthouse (1933), N. H. Snaith (1944), H. W. Robinson (1946), Ugo Masing (1954); NIDOTTE: Gluek (1961/1967), Sakenfeld (1978/1985), Clark (1993).

[79] Heath, "Grace", *DOT:P,* 302

[80] David A. Baer and Robert P. Gordon, "Ḥasad", *NIDOTTE,* II.206-213

[81] James K Bruckner, "Ethics", *DOT:P,* 228 (239)

ʾemet - Faithfulness

As the study of *ḥesed* has shown, God is an unrelenting God, faithful to His people despite their unfaithfulness. *ʾemet* is an interesting word in this context, demonstrating that the "trueness" of our deity, YHWH, is not based on His real existence in contrast to the "inexistence" of other deities. Rather, His trueness is based on His "faithfulness" to be who He promises to be, in contrast to the petty deities who show no concern for their subjects and who will turn on them when they are displeasing.

"Truth" in this context thus refers to YHWH's fulfilment of His promise "to be stable, reliable [and] secure."[82] His faithfulness to His people is demonstrated in "unheard-of ways,"[83] not least of which we have just seen in 32-33 that is to be fulfilled in 34-40. When the Torah is celebrated by the Psalmist, it is not celebrated as "true as opposed to false, but... [rather as] hav[ing] the character of being trustworthy and reliable for people to base their lives on."[84] God's trueness is thus God's faithfulness and His reliability to be who He says He will be. Therefore God's faithfulness, and thus our faith in God, is not based on blind belief, but rather in the certainty we have because God has consistently been true to His word.[85]

Topical Analysis: "Generational Curses"

Along with the abounding characteristics of God relating to compassion and mercy in 34:6, we also have an apparently problematic revelation in 34:7 regarding God's justice: God

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[82] John N. Oswalt, "Theology of the Pentateuch", *DOT:P*, 851.

[83] Oswalt, "Theology of the Pentateuch", DOT:P, 851.

[84] Walter Moberly, "'aman", *NIDOTTE* 422. Eg. Ps 119:43, 142, 151, 160.

[85] Jack B. Scott, "'emet", *TWOT*, 52-53.

does not forgive the sins of the guilty, but rather punishes them, not only the ones who sin, but also their descendants, to the third and fourth generation. This has been taken by many in both Jewish and Christian circles to mean that there are generational curses and that regardless of children's morality, if their parents have been cursed, they too will be cursed. Even Jesus' disciples seem to have held this position, given their question in John 9 as to whether the man was cursed with blindness from birth due to his own (future) sin or due to the sins of the parents.

Yet a closer study of the immediate context does not reveal these types of punitive curses exemplified here. We read in Exodus 32 of utter apostasy, yet we see judgement inflicted on perhaps one percent of the people—not everyone. Those who are allowed to remain alive do get struck, perhaps by a plague, but it does not wipe them out. They wander in the desert for a long time, but the next generation—not the fifth—is blessed with the Promised Land. This passage thus requires closer examination to unearth its meaning.

Perhaps the best treatment of this passage can be found in Gowan's theological commentary. He examines the contrast between God's "not acquitting" and His lovingkindness and the contrast between "visiting the iniquity" and His forgiveness.[86] He points out that God's forgiveness is all encompassing: iniquity, transgression (rebellion)[87], and sin. Iniquity is both the wrongful deed and the punishment for that wrongful deed.[88] Sin, in contrast, seems to be anything short of perfection based on the idea of "miss[ing] a mark or a way," and often includes the offering for the remission of sin.[89] All of these are either active or passive acts.

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[86] Gowan, Donald E. *Theology in Exodus*, 237-238.

[87] Laird Harris, *Wordbook*, 1846.

[88] Carl Schulz, "Awon", *TWOT*, 650-652.

[89] G. Herbert Livingston, "Ḥaṭa", *TWOT*, 278.

In contrast, what is not acquitted is the iniquity of the people. Often this is translated with the substantive adjective "guilty."[90] It is not that the deed is unforgiven; it is not that a lack of perfection is unforgiven; it is not even rebellion that is unforgiven. What remains unforgiven is the iniquity, the punishment aspect for those who have committed a wrongful act. When people sin, there are natural consequences. The sin may be forgiven, but the consequences remain. God does not simply say, "Well, you did wrong, but it's OK. I'll be merciful and take away the pain you caused to others and make sure you don't have to feel any of that pain yourself." Rather, God says there are natural consequences—punishments if you like, though not for punitive reasons—and that one must face those consequences. Those who particularly have to face those consequences are the stubbornly unrighteous, such as Pharaoh in the book of Exodus, who hardened his heart against the will of God and had to pay the price.

Yet why does the iniquity of one man affect his sons and his sons' sons, to the third and fourth generation? This does not seem fair to our modern and postmodern individualistic worldviews. The reason for this is quite simple from a Biblical perspective: there is no such thing as an isolated individual. The individual is always tied to the community, especially the family community. There is a corporate responsibility to take care of individuals, and when individuals sin, the natural consequences do not affect the individuals in isolation. Rather they affect the entire community, especially their families.

Gowan even adds the word "only" before "the three following generations."[91] He points out that in ancient Israel there were likely only three to four generations of people alive at the

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[90] For example, NASB, NRSV, NIV: Gowan, *Theology in Exodus, 237.*

[91] Gowan, *Theology in Exodus*, 237.

same time. The punishment for the iniquity of the fathers does not get passed on to the following generations of unborn children; rather the natural consequences of individuals' actions affect all in their immediate communities. Again, taking Pharaoh as an example his dynasty was not completely wiped out; but he did lose a son, and his army was decimated. His stubbornness affected not just his life, but also the lives of every Egyptian under his charge.

The immediate community is the limit to which God will judge. He will not take out retribution of one family on the entire nation. To do so would again emulate the pettiness of the other Canaanite deities. Rather, He forgives the sin, keeping the people alive when other deities would wipe them out. They still pay for the consequences of their sin, but their sins are forgiven out of God's indefinite mercy, and the consequences are limited to their immediate community.[92]

Conclusion - Who is YHWH?

This passage and these traits form the end *inclusio* to Exodus 3. In Exodus 3 we read of God revealing His Name: "YHWH!" and promising to "be that which I will be." In Exodus 34 we have the climax of the book of Exodus,[93] with God repeating His Name: "YHWH!" and indeed revealing that which He has become and always will be. He is a God of abounding and unrelenting love, faithfulness, patience, grace, compassion, kindness, mercy, and justice.

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[92] As a side note that cannot be addressed here, the word for "fathers" and "sons" is plural. This may or may not be somewhat reciprocal in nature, the sin of one father affecting another father who is in close association within the community but not part of the same family.

[93] Terrence E. Fretheim, "Exodus, Book of" *DOT:P,* 253. Alexander & Baker, eds., *Dictionary*, 253.

Moving into the next chapter to see how these characteristics are demonstrated throughout the book of Exodus, it should be remembered that this passage serves as more than a liturgical formula. The abounding combination of all of these concepts, piling up upon one another expressing related ideas, emphasizes the picture of who YHWH *El* is: God Most High who forgives and saves, who clings to His people even in the midst of apostasy, and who relentlessly offers a loving covenant relationship as a means of grace to enable Israel to be a people of God on behalf of the world. Following this revelation is the reassurance of the Covenant and the presence of God amongst the people of God as they continue to be a people on the move throughout the world.

Chapter Four

Reading Exodus 3-34 as Rhetorical Promise-Fulfilment Regarding the Identity of God and God's Relationship with Israel

Introduction

As established in the previous two chapters, Exodus 3:13-15 and Exodus 34:5-7 serve as an *inclusio* around material in between. In Exodus 3, God made a promise regarding His identity as part of authenticating the call of Moses. There He promised, "*ʾehyeh ʾašer ʾehyeh,*" followed by equating this with His name: "*ʾehyeh* sent me to you... YHWH sent me to you." The rhetorical implication was that God's nature would become evident through His actions in dealing with the people of Israel.[94] Likewise, in Exodus 34, God again repeats his name three times and in doing so defines specifically that which His actions have made evident: YHWH! I am YHWH! YHWH *El* is compassionate, gracious, patient, abounding in lovingkindness and faithfulness, yet remaining just for the stubbornly unrighteous.

In this chapter, I will be looking at the material between Exodus 3 and 34 in order to demonstrate how each section reflects one or more of these characteristics. To be clear, my intention here is not to propose that this is the only way to read the book of Exodus. Looking at the rhetorical effect of Exodus 3:13-15 and Exodus 34:5-7 as an *inclusio* for the material in between, I feel that this is the best way to read the book of Exodus in its final form, taking an inductive approach. I fully understand, however, that each pericope, either in their original forms or in the layout I have chosen, will have other legitimate meanings. Yet, as my intention is to demonstrate how the pericopes relate to the *inclusio*, I will not be dealing with these other

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[94] Tigay, *Exodus*, 111.

meanings. I will leave that for other scholars or for future efforts where those legitimate lines of thought can receive adequate attention.

Exodus 3-4: Moses in the Wilderness

As I have already dealt with this section to some extent in the second chapter of this thesis, I will not belabor the issue by repeating my topical analysis of the call of Moses. I will, however, point out several examples of the traits of God mentioned in Exodus 34:5-7 that are present even at this early stage of Moses objecting to being the one to draw God's people out of Egypt. First, God identifies Himself as the "God of your fathers." As a reminder, this is a common reference to a personal deity.[95] Along with the mysterious transcendence of YHWH being likened to the transcendent *El* of the Canaanite pantheon is a reminder that Israel's God is also very near and personal.[96] Furthermore, YHWH promises to "be with" Moses, indicating a very immanent presence that paradoxically does not conflict with His transcendence.

In "being with" Moses' mouth, God is exemplifying grace. God is granting favor to Moses, enabling him to do something that Moses cannot naturally do. This enables Moses to perform a very specific function for his calling. Furthermore, in hearing the cry of His people (3:7), God is also exhibiting grace, as this characteristic specifically refers to God "hearing the cry of the vexed debtor,"[97] with debt being a common cause of slavery.

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[95] Janzen, *Exodus*, 32.

[96] Bruckner, *Exodus*, 45.

[97] *BDB*, 337.

Most notably, as I mentioned in chapter two, God shows extreme patience with Moses during these two chapters. When Moses poses objections, God counters them, promising to be with Moses and to bless him with the ability to do what He needs him to do. Even when God does get angry, His anger does not burn out completely, to the point of giving up on and destroying Moses. Rather, God amends His plan in order to allow Aaron to assist Moses in completing his call.

During Moses' return to Egypt, Moses and Zipporah have a short but interesting encounter with God. Although the story as we have it is only a fragment of the original,[98] it is still important to read it in light of God actions in the book of Exodus defining His character. Again, there are other ways to read this passage that are more important for the original meaning, but my present interest is to see how it fits into my overall thesis. Here, God seeks out Moses (or possibly Moses' son) in order to kill him. We do not know why God is doing this, but we do know that YHWH is appeased when Zipporah circumcises her son. What we have here is an example of Moses (presumably) acting unrighteously in breaking the only requirement of the Abrahamic covenant: circumcising his son. The result is that God takes judgemental action on the sin of Moses, an action affects only his immediate family. Yet when Zipporah acts righteously, YHWH shows infinite mercy, leaving Moses alone, allowing him to redeem the entire nation of Israel, which eventually paves the way for the Messiah.

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[98] Tigay, *Exodus*, 113.

Exodus 5-11: Hardening Pharaoh's Heart

Throughout Exodus 5-11, God strikes Egypt with nine different plagues. Knowing Pharaoh had already resolved to make Israel's labor strenuous (see Ex 1:8-12), God knew that He would have to strengthen Pharaoh's resolve before He could break it. This would be accomplished initially via the plagues and ultimately through the death of Pharaoh's firstborn son (see Ex 4:21-23).

Concerning this whole section, debates often rage over whether God hardened Pharaoh's heart or whether Pharaoh hardened his own heart. These often turn into a free-will versus determinism debates in the various classes I participate in or assist with. Yet I find such debates miss the point of the grammar in the text, which, as I will demonstrate, brings us back to God being merciful and just. Three different Hebrew words are used for the hardening of Pharoah's heart: *qašah*, *ḥazaq*, and *kaḇad*. With the use of *qašah* and *kaḇad*, when Pharaoh's heart is hardened, both God and Pharaoh are at times the subject of the verb. The stem tends to be Hiphil, where, in my interpretation, the focus of the action is not as much on the agent as the process by which a resulting state is achieved.[99] In this case, the process by which Pharaoh's heart is hardened is through the plagues. On the other hand, *ḥazaq* tends to be used with God as the subject in the Piel—focusing on the resulting state[100] of Pharaoh's heart being hard—and with Pharaoh's heart as the subject in the Qal—simply denoting a state of being without focusing on the cause at all.[101]

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[99] Arnold & Choi, *Guide*, 43.

[100] Arnold & Choi, *Guide*, 42-43.

[101] Arnold & Choi, *Guide*, 38

Thus, rather than the text indicating that either God or Pharaoh was responsible for the action, the text primarily focuses on the means by which Pharaoh's heart was hardened (i.e. the plagues), and the result of Pharaoh's heart being hard. To bring this back to the point at hand, in 1:8-12 Pharaoh's will was already set to force Israel into hard labor to prevent them from becoming greater than Egypt. In Exodus 5, Moses comes to Pharaoh at a time when Pharaoh's mind is already made up to reduce Israel's force. Pharaoh refuses to let Israel go. As 4:22 indicates, God considers Israel His firstborn son. Pharaoh has thus already acted unrighteously by resolving to stifle Israel's growth. Before punishing Pharaoh, God mercifully gives him the opportunity to do what is right. Yet as Pharaoh is stubbornly unrighteous, God's method of justice is punishment via the plagues. The plagues in turn act to harden Pharaoh's resolve not to let Israel go, because only by hardening Pharaoh's resolve can God push Pharaoh to a breaking point where he would allow Israel to go. In effect, the plagues were the catalyst that led Pharaoh to utter despair, so that eventually at the death of his son, Pharaoh was ready to convert and say, "Not my will, but Yours be done."

All of these plagues, therefore, demonstrate God's character. First, YHWH is transcendent, capable of doing things Pharaoh's magicians are unable to do. Secondly, YHWH is personal, willing to act on behalf of His people through Moses and Aaron. Thirdly, YHWH shows mercy, most especially by rescuing Israel, but also by giving Pharaoh an opportunity to do what is right before any judgement takes place. Next, YHWH is gracious, giving Moses and Aaron specific abilities that enabled them to perform their specific tasks. Notably absent in this section is any mention of YHWH's anger. God methodically continues to do what needs to be done without letting Pharaoh's obstinacy drive Him to the point of complete destruction, even

when His human counterparts become irate (11:8). In all of this, YHWH demonstrates unfailing love to Israel by redeeming her from such oppressive hands, and in doing so proves that He is faithful to be what He says He will be.[102]

Structure of the Nine Plagues			
Plague	**Warning**	**Location**	**Time of Day**
Bloody Water (7:14-25)	Warning Given	Outside	Morning
Frogs (8:1-15)	Warning Given	Palace	Unspecified
Gnats (8:16-19)	No Warning	Unspecified	Unspecified
Flies (8:20-32)	Warning Given	Outside	Morning
Pestilence (9:1-7)	Warning Given	Palace	Unspecified
Boils (9:8-13)	No Warning	Unspecified	Unspecified
Hail (9:13-35)	Warning Given	Outside	Morning
Locusts (10:1-20)	Warning Given	Palace	Unspecified
Darkness (10:21-29)	No Warning	Unspecified	Unspecified

Table 2

Exodus 12-13: The Passover

Although the Passover material includes what can be called a tenth plague, it is important to treat this material as a separate unit for three reasons. First, the order in which the first nine plagues occur is an intentional, repetitive theme by the redactor of this section of material. The table above has been adapted from Carol Meyers' commentary on Exodus and demonstrates the intentional structuring of the first nine plagues as separate from, but leading up, to this tenth plague.

[102] Table adapted from Carol Meyers, *Exodus* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 78.

Secondly, the purpose of the plagues is different. In the first nine plagues, the purpose was to strengthen Pharaoh's resolve against Israel. In the tenth plague, the purpose is to break his resolve so that he would not only let Israel go but drive them out with parting gifts, so to speak.[103] At this point Pharaoh's faith that Egypt's gods would protect the Egyptians from these "godless slaves" (as he perceived them) had been demolished, and finally in these chapters he will recognize the true power of Israel's God.[104]

Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly from an inductive standpoint, in these chapters we have a change in style of storytelling. Whereas everything leading up to this point has been prose narrative with a little poetry weaved in, in this section the redactor presents his readers with ritual and liturgy.

Within the ritual and liturgy, God's character is further revealed. The Egyptians have moved collectively to suppress Israel time and time again, and their obstinacy has reached its completion. In this final plague, God strikes down the firstborn of everyone who does not accept His protection[105] and participate in the Passover ritual. In doing so, God shows both justice and mercy. He shows justice by judging the Egyptians for their stubbornly unrighteous behavior towards the Israelites. Yet at the same time, He shows mercy by not destroying the entire nation

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[103] Meyers, *Exodus,* 91-92.

[104] Fred Blumenthal, "The Ten Plagues: Debunking Egyptian Polytheism" in *Jewish Bible Quarterly*, Vol. 40, Issue 4 (October 2012), 255-256.

[105] It is important to note the relationship between "passover" and "protect." In Isa 31:5, the passage reads, "Like the birds that fly, even so will the LORD of Hosts shield Jerusalem, shielding and saving, protecting and rescuing." The same Hebrew word *pasaḥ*, translated "protecting" in Isa 31:5, is used in this context for YHWH passing over Israel. Such a relationship leads certain scholars to favor this word being translated as "protect" in this passage. Cf. Tigay, "Exodus", 126, 128.

and by offering His protection. He again demonstrates His supremacy by meting "out punishments to all the gods of Egypt,"[106] yet remains a faithful, personal protector of Israel by passing over all the houses that participate in the ritual. Finally, His grace is demonstrated by causing the Egyptians to have a favorable disposition towards Israel, giving them gifts of silver, gold, and clothing (12:36) that could be used for the specific purpose of worshipping God (12:31).

Exodus 14-15: Crossing the Re(e)d Sea[107]

Before discussing the crossing of the Re(e)d Sea, I want to make an aside to point out why this passage, especially 15:1-21, is the pivotal point in the book of Exodus and perhaps even a pivotal passage in the Pentateuch as a whole. To do so, I must first establish that the general material of the Pentateuch as a whole is geographical[108] in nature. This is not to say that each pericope or even each book is geographical in nature. Genesis, for example, seems more biographical in nature, with the sections broken apart by the *tôlĕdōt* phrases. Leviticus by itself seems more ideological in nature, discussing the laws being given. Yet as a whole in its final form, the Pentateuch is focused on land.

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[106] Exodus 12:12, JPS

[107] There is debate as to whether the Israelites crossed the Red Sea or the Sea of Reeds. Rather than entering into that debate, I will simply refer to this as the Re(e)d Sea.

[108] For a discussion on the term "general materials" of a book, see Bauer and Traina's *Inductive Bible Study*, pp 83-87. In short, geographical materials focus on geographical locations. In our context, this would be the progressive movement from one place to another. Likewise, biographical and historical materials say nothing regarding the actual persons or historicity of a particular text; rather, biographical materials focus primarily on persons, while historical materials focus primarily on the progression of time, especially chronological time.

The Pentateuch begins with the creation of the Earth (Genesis 1), the placement of humanity in a specific location (Genesis 2), and humanity's movement away from that specific location (Genesis 3-11). When God begins to redeem humanity, a promise is given to Abraham to have descendants, land, and a blessing to bless others in the land (Genesis 12). Abraham then moves to that land and has children and grandchildren (Genesis 12-37) prior to Joseph and family moving to Egypt (Genesis 38-50). The story picks up in Exodus, where it immediately focuses on the descendants of Jacob being in the land of Egypt, and the first half of Exodus focuses on their situation in that land (Exodus 1-15). The second half of Exodus focuses on Israel in relation to Sinai (Exodus 15-40), where they remain for the majority of the Pentateuch (Exodus 19 – Numbers 10). The next section of material focuses on Israel wandering through the wilderness (Numbers 10-36), before Deuteronomy in one day prepares them for entering the Promised Land.

This focus on land is not surprising, given that the final form of the Pentateuch probably came into being sometime during the Persian period after the Babylonian Exile.[109] This is not to say that the individual materials were written that late.[110] Brian Russell in his PhD dissertation clearly demonstrated that Exodus 15:1-21 was in circulation during the pre-exilic period, as it

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[109] Cf. James W. Watts, ed., *Persia and Torah: The Theory of Imperial Authorization of the Pentateuch* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001) and especially the essay therein of Lester L Grabbe, "The Law of Moses in the Ezra Tradition: More Virtual than Real?" 91-114.

[110] Although the theory of Persian authorization, renewed by Peter Frei in 1984, is only accepted as a possibility, not an actuality, critical scholars tend to agree that the final form of the Pentateuch was not extant until between the early fifth century and the late third century after Israel had returned to her homeland but was still under pressure from foreign rule (Grabbe, "The Law of Moses", 99-100).

was in part responsible for the development of the narrative account in Exodus 14 and Joshua 2-5. Likewise the writers of Isaiah 11-12 and of Psalms 74, 77, 78, and 114 utilized it, indicating that at the very latest it was in use prior to the late eighth century.[111] His conclusion, which I fully accept and will not reproduce in full here, was that it is "demonstrably probable" that the date of this passage goes back to the mid-twelfth century BCE.[112] As this thesis is focused on the final form of the text, I will not belabor the point with further details on dating. Rather, I will return to demonstrating how this passage is pivotal in nature both within Exodus and within the Pentateuch as a whole.

Pilgrimage Pattern in the Exodus

I. Egypt

A. Chapters 1-2: Moses' movement from Egypt to Midian

B. Two calls and two confrontations

i. 3.1-6.1: Moses' first call and confrontation with Pharaoh

i′. 6.2-14.31: Moses' second call and Yahweh's confrontation with Pharaoh

The conflict between the powers of Egypt and Sinai

15.1-21: Victory at the sea

II. Sinai

A′. 15.22-18.27: Israel's movement from Egypt to Midian

B′. Two covenants and two sets of tablets

i. Chapters 19-31: Israel's first covenant with Yahweh; the first tablets

i′. Chapters 32-40: Israel's second covenant with Yahweh; the second tablets

Table 3

[111] Brian Russell, *The Song of the Sea.* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007), 146

[112] Russell, *Song*, 148

Consider the chiastic structure of the book of Exodus as presented in Table 3, based on the demonstrable assumption that the general materials here are geographical in nature.[113] Thus the structure of the book of Exodus, [114] viewed through the lens of geographic general materials indicating the (second)[115] beginning of a pilgrimage from a foreign land to the Promised Land, indicates that the crossing of the Re(e)d Sea is the chiastic center of the book and the pivot upon which the book turns. Whereas previously Israel was constrained in Egypt under harsh slavery to Egypt and her gods, now Israel is moving towards Sinai where she can finally be free to serve YHWH. Furthermore, this passage is not only pivotal for the book of Exodus but also for the Pentateuch as a whole. Whereas humanity began falling away from God in Genesis 3-11 and Israel moved further away from the land God promised her in Genesis 38-50, Israel is now moving back to the land God promised her in order to (as we will soon find out) serve as a kingdom of priests to restore humanity back to God.

Now that I have followed the necessary tangent in showing the pivotal importance of this passage, let us move back to the topic at hand: how this unit of material demonstrates the

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[113] Table 3 from Mark S. Smith, *The Pilgrimage Pattern in Exodus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 190.

[114] Note how this structure also supports the overall position of this thesis. B.i. directly mirrors B′.i′. Moses' initial call, in which God promises His character will be revealed through His actions, begins the main section of the first half of the book. The making of the second covenant, in which God states His character has been revealed through His actions, concludes the last part of the second half of the book.

[115] The first pilgrimage was Abram's journey from Ur to Canaan that began in the pivotal passage of Genesis 12. This second pilgrimage from Egypt to Canaan begins here in the pivotal passage of Genesis 14-15. Such focus on return to one's homeland gives further credence to the idea that the Pentateuch in its final form was not extant until the Persian period, when Israel was once again making a pilgrimage home from Babylonian exile.

characteristics of God which were promised to be revealed in Exodus 3:13-15 and which were stated as demonstrated in Exodus 34:5-7. The obvious characteristics that God portrays in Exodus 14 are those of justice and faithfulness. French author Jean Louis Ska indicated in his thesis on *Le Passage de la Mer* (14:1-31) that the narrative in this section, in addition to glorifying God, is primarily the recognition that Israel's adversaries are God's adversaries (14:25) and that the result of God's protection is Israel's faith in God (14:31).[116] By protecting Israel against an unrighteous, oppressive Egypt, God is demonstrating faithfulness to Israel and exercising judgement upon Egypt. As a result of God's demonstration, Israel has faith in Him and in Moses. Although Ska suggested that this passage also justified holy war, I see no evidence of this. The only one acting here is God. God is not telling Israel that their war against Egypt is justified. Rather, God alone has the authority to enact judgement upon the unrighteous, and although Moses is utilized in order to further endorse his role as God's servant, God alone acts in judgement of the Egyptians, thus demonstrating faithfulness to His people.

Of considerable importance in Exodus 15 is the demonstration that YHWH is both transcendent and immanent. Exodus 15:2 immediately echoes 3:14-15,[117] indicating that the "God of my father," the personal deity, was responsible for rescuing Israel from the hand of her enemies. Exodus 15:3 then moves into describing the transcendence of God, again using the mysterious name YHWH. In 15:4 *tĕhomut* (NRSV, "floods"; NASB, "deeps") covered the

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[116] Jean Louis Ska, *Le Passage De La Mer: Étude de la construction, du style et de la symbolique d'Ex 14,1-31* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1986), 50.

[117] This statement is not meant to imply that 3:14-15 was written before the Song of the Sea. Rather, in dealing with the final form of the text, how we have it now, 15:2 repeats the same phrase, "God of my father."

Egyptians, a subtle reference to God's supremacy above Ti'amat, the mother of the gods in the Enuma Elish.[118] Likewise in 15:8 *tĕhomut* is paired with "flowing waters" (NASB), a possible indication that Apsû (meaning "flowing waters"), the progenitor of the deities in the Enuma Elish,[119] is also being relegated to a *persona non grata* in God's sanctuary. Exodus 15:11 explicitly states that other gods do not compare to YHWH, and while they are ousted, God has the compassion to bring Israel into His sanctuary (15:17).

Although the justice and the transcendence of YHWH are most clearly seen in the Song of the Sea, a closer reading such as has been provided above demonstrates that this passage also shows a personal God who is faithful to His people and compassionate in bringing them into His home. Although lacking in parallel stories such as the Baal Epic,[120] God's actions clearly demonstrate His lovingkindness (explicit in 15:13) in this central, pivotal passage that is perhaps one of the oldest portions of the Bible.

Exodus 16-18: Israel in the Wilderness

In the Wilderness of Sin, God again demonstrates compassion, grace, patience, lovingkindness, and faithfulness to His people. Grace and compassion are demonstrated immediately. Israel needed to get from the boundary of the Re(e)d Sea to Sinai. With such large numbers, they had nothing to eat. Even in their grumbling, there is no indication that God

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[118] Andrea Seri, "The Role of Creation in Enūma Eliš" in *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* Vol. 12, no. 1(2012), 8.

[119] Seri, "The role of creation", 8.

[120] Cf Russell, *Song*, 39-42.

becomes angry. Rather, God exhibits grace and compassion by providing for their needs so that they can accomplish the task set out for them.

When Israel disobeys God and keeps too much of the manna, God mercifully forgives them, yet they still have to face the natural consequences of their actions, the rotting food. Inasmuch as God exhibits justice, yet He remains patient even when Moses becomes angry. Likewise, when Israel quarrels for a lack of water, although Moses shows frustration, God shows patience, compassion, and grace, miraculously providing for them what they need to continue the journey. Jethro's response when Moses arrives again most clearly demonstrates God's supremacy: "Now I know that YHWH is greater than all gods..." (18:11a)[121].

Exodus 19-31: Forming a Covenant and Tabernacle

Chiastic Covenant Theme in the Pentateuch
A. Genesis 9: Noahide Covenant Guarantees Life for all Humanity in all the Earth
B. Genesis 17: Abrahamic Covenant Guarantees Abraham Descendants
C. Exodus 19: Sinai Covenant Guarantees Israel to be a Sacerdotal People
B′. Numbers 25: Phinehan Covenant Guarantees Sacerdotal Descendants
A′. Deuteronomy 29: Moabite Covenant Guarantees Life to a Sacerdotal People in a Sacerdotal Land.

Table 4

In the sense that Exodus 15:1-21 serves as the chiastic center and pivotal moment of the book of Exodus, Exodus 19 serves as the introduction to the actualization of the pivot and the

[121] JPS. Proper name substituted for "the LORD."

chiastic center of the Pentateuch's covenant theme (see Table 4).[122] In effect, the events of Exodus 14-15 provide hortatory causation[123] for the events in Exodus 19-24. This is stated plainly by the writer in 19:4: "You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians. I lifted you up on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. So now..."[124] Regardless of whether or not the initial writer of Exodus 19:4 is referencing the narrative of Exodus 14, it is clear that he or she is referring to the events described in the narrative when discussing what God did to the Egyptians. Furthermore, the reference to Israel being brought to God's mountain upon eagles' wings bears a striking resemblance to a representation of the fulfilment of Exodus 15:17.[125] As a result of the pivotal material, Israel is exhorted to listen to, accept, and keep the covenant.

Here in Exodus 19 especially, yet also throughout 19-31, the characteristics God will vocalize in 34:5-7 are made abundantly clear. I will take them in the order they are given in Exodus 34:5-7.

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[122] Russell, Brian. Notes from *Inductive Bible Study: Pentateuch.* Orlando: Asbury Theological Seminary, 2012.

[123] Hortatory causation is the move from an indicative statement to an exhortation. Cf. Bauer and Traina, *Inductive Bible Study,* 105-107.

[124] The translation is my own.

[125] It should be noted that the eternal sanctuary prepared by God's hands in all likelihood refers to an eschatological sanctuary. Although God will bring Israel to His own mountain in 15:17, the fact that Israel will be "planted" in the mountain and will dwell in that sanctuary eternally (15:18) established by God's own hands indicates this is a permanent settlement, not a one-year stop along a 40-year journey. Thus Israel being brought to the mountain of God, Sinai, in Exodus 19 should be interpreted as a temporal representation of an eschatological process. Cf. Kevin Chen, *Eschatological Sanctuary in Exodus 15:17 and Related Texts* (New York: Peter Lang, 2013), especially pp. 123-127..

YHWH YHWH YHWH El

The paradoxically transcendent-yet-personal nature of God stands out most in this section. Again I return to 19:4 to show God's past actions demonstrate transcendence over the Egyptians and their gods. Likewise, the personal nature of God is exhibited by His bringing Israel unto Himself. Exodus 19:5 furthers the demonstration of God's personal nature, indicating Israel will be His "treasured possession." The ritual purity needed in order to see God reflects transcendence again, while the fact that the entire nation of Israel was able to hear God directly reflects His personal nature. God's appearance as a cloud with thunder, lightning, and smoke, along with Israel's response of fear, again highlights God's transcendence. Yet the promised blessings wherever God's name is proclaimed (20:21) again bring the reader to reflect on God's personal nature.

The paradoxical transcendent-yet-personal nature perhaps is best exhibited by the close of this section of material. In Exodus 25-31, God promises to tabernacle amongst the people of Isarel. Israel, for the time being, is going to be a nomadic people. Rather than requiring Israel to come to Sinai to worship Him, He is instead going to travel with them in the tabernacle. Yet the tabernacle has very specific instructions so that God's transcendence is preserved. This applies not only to the building of the tabernacle, but also to the people who enter it and the sacrifices made therein. This is most succinctly stated in 29:42b-46:

> For there I will meet with you, and there I will speak with you, and there I will meet with the Israelites, and it shall be sanctified by My Presence. I will sanctify the Tent of Meeting and the altar, and I will consecrate Aaron and his sons to serve Me as priests. I will abide among the Israelites, and I will be their God. And

they shall know that I, YHWH, am their God, who brought them out from the land of Egypt that I might abide among them, I, YHWH, their God.[126]

Compassion and Grace

God's compassion is best exemplified, again, in 19:4. "I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself." Recall that compassion comes from the word meaning "womb" and refers to God's motherly love for His children. In 19:4[127] God presents Himself as a mother eagle[128] caring for her young and bringing them back to her nest. The parallel passage in Deuteronomy expounds upon this idea, showing an eagle rescuing her young from a howling desert wasteland where they would otherwise be prey to be feasted upon by stronger enemies.

This act of compassion was driven out of God's own character. It was not a result of Israel seeking God, but rather a result of a mother hearing the cries of her children and seeking to rescue them. "They did not seek God before God sought them. They did not begin by keeping laws or making sacrifices. They simply cried out for help. Their relationship with God began with God's own unexpected mercy and provision."[129]

"God's own unexpected mercy and provision"[130] immediately leads to the concept of grace. Furthermore, it leads specifically to the Wesleyan concept of prevenient grace. God's

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[126] JPS Translation, YHWH substituted for "the LORD."

[127] Cf. Deut 32:11-12

[128] Whether this word refers to an eagle, vulture, or giffon does not matter in this context. The point the writer makes is the motherly instincts of these birds that apply to God's compassion for His children.

[129] Bruckner, *Exodus*, 172.

[130] Bruckner, *Exodus*, 172.

unexpected provision here came before Israel did anything to deserve it. In all reality, God's provision came before Israel as a unified nation even existed.[131] Whereas many Christians popularly view the Law as a burden that Israel could never live up to, viewed in the context of Exodus 19-24 and the greater context of Exodus and the Pentateuch as wholes, the Law is the most profound form of prevenient grace. The Law was given to Israel to establish her as God's treasured possession. As Bruckner pointed out earlier, Israel did not ask for this Law to be given. Rather, she was graciously given it so that she would have the ability to perform her role as a kingdom of priests, a holy nation.

Slow to Anger

Although not prominent in this section of material, God demonstrates patience with Israel at least once. Despite Israel acting in ways that could anger Him at the end of Exodus 20, there is never any indication that God becomes angry. There, Israel is afraid and does not want to continue listening to the voice of God. Rather than becoming angry at their rejection, God has Moses patiently explain that there is no need to be afraid. God came to test them so that they might have the fear of God in them and not go astray. From that point forward, God speaks directly to Moses rather than to all of Israel, not out of anger, but out of grace.

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[131] The historicity of the Sinai covenant is widely debated amongst critical scholars (cf. Meyers, *Exodus,* 142-147). However, my interest lies not in proving the history, but rather in reading the rhetoric of the narrative. In the narrative, the Sinai covenant is the basis for forming a people. Based in forms of both ancient royal covenants in which a citizenry would accept a new king and in suzerainty treaties, in which a vassal king would pledge his rule to more powerful king, (cf. Tigay, "Exodus", 145 and Meyers, *Exodus,* 148-151), the Sinai covenant in narrative form becomes the founding document that allows Israel as a collective nation to accept God as her king for the first time.

Abounding in Lovingkindness, Faithfullness, and Mercy while Remaining Just

More than anything else, this is what the Decalogue and the Book of the Covenant are all about. The Decalogue begins with commands regarding the supremacy of God: I am YHWH your God; have no other gods before me; do not make any idols to represent me;[132] do not misuse the name YHWH. After this the Decalogue moves to rules providing mercy to and justice for the disprivledged. First is the Sabbath command, which not only gives the wealthy a break from their work, but also specifically the children, slaves, and aliens residing with Israel. Next is the command to honor one's father and mother. In a time when most work was manual labor, the elderly could not earn a living. This mandate shows lovingkindness to the elderly by requiring able-bodied children to take care of their infirm parents. Murder, adultery, stealing, perjury, and coveting all deal with the human tendency to selfishly take what belongs to another to better oneself. In such a community-oriented society, these basic laws preemptively provide justice for those who would have what little they own taken from them—up to and including their lives.

Within the Book of the Covenant (Exodus 21-23) the laws become even more specific for demonstrating lovingkindness, faithfulness, mercy, and justice. The slavery laws—while appalling to the contemporary mindset that views slavery through the historical lens of human trafficking and the US Civil War—actually provide a means for the disprivlidged to make a better life for themselves by indenturing themselves to masters. The masters then are charged to take care of their slaves and set them free, without payment, every seventh year. Abuse of slaves and human trafficking is forbidden, punishable by the requirement to set the slave free and death, respectively. All this demonstrates that the masters are to exhibit the same lovingkindness to

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[132] Here in Exodus 20:5-6 there is also a direct reference to Exodus 34:7 regarding God's justice and mercy.

their slaves as God has shown to Israel. If the lovingkindness is not demonstrated, mercy is shown to the slave, and the master must face whatever just penalty his actions have warranted.

The lovingkindness Israel is called to emulate does not stop at a demonstration to other Israeli citizens. In the same way that God has called Israel to be a kingdom of priests, God demands that Israel demonstrate this love for outsiders. Although as a command love for outsiders is more explicitly stated in Leviticus 19, Exodus 22:20-23 shows the limits of God's patience regarding failure to show love for aliens, widows, and orphans. If Israel ever returns to the oppressive tactics of the Egyptians in their treatment of aliens, widows, or orphans, God promises justice by taking the lives of the oppressors and mercifully setting the oppressed free. In making such laws, God promises to continue to be faithful to His character and calls Israel to emulate those characteristics to everyone she encounters.

Exodus 32-34: Failure and Forgiveness

The final section leading up to the theophany in Exodus 34:5-7 deals with Israel's failure to do as God has required, which I have already dealt with in chapter three of this thesis. What we have is a unit of text made coherent by a redactor in which Israel explicitly disobeyed the command not to make idols. The precise intention of Israel's actions is unclear.[133] It is possible they wanted the calf to represent YHWH. It is possible they wanted the calf to represent Moses.[134] It is possible they wanted the calf to represent a foreign deity. I personally prefer the

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[133] Cf. Meyers, *Exodus*, 258-260

[134] Cf. Martin I. Lockshin, translator and editor, *Rashbam's Commentary on Exodus: An Annotated Translation* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) 393-397.

interpretation that the calf was meant as an inanimate cherub upon which the invisible spirit of YHWH was said to ride.[135] Regardless of the interpretation concerning intention, what we do know is that the instructions for God dwelling amongst His people had just been laid out (Exodus 25-31), and that rather than waiting on God's timing and following those instructions, Israel instead found another way to force God to be amongst them by doing the exact opposite of what He commanded.

The result was utter catastrophe. God saw what is going on and and told Moses to leave Him alone so that His anger can burn against Israel and He might destroy them. He would still fulfill His promise to Abraham, making a great nation out of Moses. But the covenant He just made with His people had been broken, and justice needed to be served.

Despite the fact that God was clearly angry, even at this stage (32:10) God was staying true to His character. He would act justly by destroying the stubbornly unrighteous, and He would do so by allowing His anger to burn slowly. (This brings to mind the long-nosed euphemism discussed in chapter three.) Furthermore, in suggesting to make a great nation out of Moses, He was staying true to His character of mercy, not destroying the entire nation on account of the sin of many; but rather leaving the one righteous man alive in order to start over to accomplish His plan—like as in the Noah story.

However, Moses had a different plan. He was not interested in self-promotion at this time, becoming the father of a great nation. That was the role of Abraham. Moses' role was to draw Israel out of Egypt and unto the Promised Land. He reminded God of His role and implored God to stay true to His character, showing mercy by forgiving the transgression, iniquity, and sin

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[135] Sarna, *Exodus*, 203.

of the people. To paraphrase, He asked God to have a slightly longer nose, so that the anger would not burn it completely. Thus God relented, allowed His anger to subside, and stayed true to His character by forgiving the sin, allowing Israel as a whole a second chance they did not deserve. Justice was still done: 3,000 men paid with their lives. But the overall message of this terrible event was that God would stay true and be what He promised to be. The conclusion to this section then comes with God succinctly stating His character in 34:5-7 and re-establishing the covenant prior to tabernacling amongst them for the rest of the book.

Conclusion

I have barely scratched the surface of how the material between Exodus 3-34 demonstrates promise and fulfillment regarding God's character becoming known through His actions. For the purposes of this thesis, however, I hope I have clearly shown that God demonstrated His character throughout the book of Exodus by always being transcendent, yet immanent; merciful and loving, yet just; faithful to be who He promised to be: a gracious God enabling His people to be a sacerdotal kingdom and holy nation.

Chapter Five

Conclusion

Summary of Results[136]

The purpose of this thesis has been to argue that the primary rhetorical purpose of the book of Exodus in its final form is to convince the reader that God will be what He promises to be. Based on the final redaction of Exodus, it has been argued that the revelation of the divine name in Exodus 3 is a promise that God's character would be revealed through His actions, that the material between Exodus 3 and 34 serves to reveal that character through His actions, and that the revelation in Exodus 34 serves to succinctly state and solidify what God's actions have revealed His character to be.

The second chapter of this work argued from a grammatical perspective that *ʾehyeh ʾašer ʾehyeh* should not be interpreted in the present tense, as "I am who I am," but rather as "I will be who/what I will be." Rhetorically speaking, it was argued that this should be interpreted as, "My character will become evident through my actions." Further, it was argued that YHWH should be interpreted as directly parallel to *ʾehyeh* in the Qal stem, not the Hiphil. Thus YHWH, along with the implied pronoun reference to *ʾel*, should not be interpreted as "God Most High who causes all things to be," but rather as "God Most High who is who/what He promises to be."

The third chapter of this work argued from an exegetical perspective that the promise, "My character will become known by my actions," was succinctly stated as fulfilled in Exodus

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[136] The style of this conclusion intentionally emulates that of Kevin Chen's *Eschatological Sanctuary in Exodus 15:17 and Related Texts*.

34:5-7. God had demonstrated His character to be transcendent yet personal, compassionate, gracious, patient, abounding in lovingkindness and faithfulness, and just. The fulfillment of the promise thus served as the foundation for the covenant relationship God formed with Israel, tabernacling with them in Exodus 34-40.

The fourth chapter of this work provided a brief yet substantive overview of how God's actions in the material between these two theophanies demonstrated His character to be transcendent yet personal, compassionate, gracious, patient, abounding in lovingkindness and faithfulness, and just. Numerous examples were given to support this concept, thereby providing a glimpse of how the complete book of Exodus makes this unique claim.

Implications for Biblical Studies

This thesis has several important implications for the study of the Bible. First, it illuminates the importance of literary readings of the final form of the text. Although historical-critical studies have their place, they have gained too much of an exclusive emphasis in today's Academy. Literary readings of the text, although greatly revived in the recent years, still have not earned their rightful place in the Academy. It is important, especially as Wesleyan scholars, that we view the final form of the text as inspired scripture and discover the message it has for today. Far too often critical scholars feel the need to piece apart the history behind the text in a way that has much less relevance for today's world. Likewise, far too often conservative scholars and laity find the need to treat the Bible as inspired historiography, missing the primary rhetorical message of the text, which can often only be found when setting aside our bias that everything in the Bible must have occurred precisely as written.

Second, this work has important implications for a theology of the Pentateuch. The meaning of the divine name in Exodus only receives its fullest meaning when read in light of the final form of the Pentateuch. Although this work does not discount the possibility that YHWH outside of Exodus could be interpreted in the Hiphil, it lends a great deal of credence to the idea that the use of YHWH by the final redactor of the Pentateuch had more to do with promise and fulfillment, especially in light of the covenantal themes.

Thirdly, this work has important implications for a theology of the First Testament. Given the assumption that the final form of the Pentateuch was not extant until shortly before or during the Persian period, it is probable that the final redactors of the Prophets and possibly the Writings (in the Hebrew order of the books) also viewed the divine name as a statement of promise and fulfillment. This becomes especially true with the frequent variations of Exodus 34:5-7 found throughout the First Testament. As YHWH has consistently demonstrated these characteristics in the Pentateuch, and especially in Exodus, so are YHWH's people called by the Prophets to emulate those characteristics to each other and to outsiders.

Areas for Further Study

The thesis of this work that Exodus 3:13-15 and Exodus 34:5-7 serve as an *inclusio* for the theme of defining God's character based on His actions warrants further study. Of primary interest is how to interpret the rest of the book of Exodus. If Exodus 3-34 serves as a coherent, mirrored unit, the question arises regarding the purpose of Exodus 1-2 and 35-40. I have briefly proposed the hypothesis that Exodus 1-2 posits a rhetorical question, "Where is God?" which is ultimately answered in Exodus 35-40: God was taking a Sabbath, sitting upon his throne

allowing creation to flourish when something went tragically wrong. Actively listening to the cry of this oppressed people, He came to their rescue, brought them to Himself, and then tabernacled amongst them, charging them to act in the same way for all the peoples of the Earth. This is a hypothesis that cannot be studied further here, given the limitations of this thesis.

Of secondary interest is a test to see if this thesis holds true for the rest of the Pentateuch and the rest of the First Testament. Although I have demonstrated that this thesis is most clearly upheld when reading Exodus within the final form of the Pentateuch as a whole, I have not adequately studied the use of the divine name outside of Exodus to see if the redactor(s) kept this in mind when forming the Pentateuch and the greater Hebrew canon. Perhaps one or more of these remaining issues will form the focus of my future post-graduate studies.

Concluding Remarks

This work has attempted to argue that the divine name in Exodus is best read as a statement of promise and fulfilment. God claimed in Exodus 3 that His character would become known via His actions. God stated in Exodus 34 that His character had become known via His actions, and that He would remain true to that character for all eternity. It is hoped that this work has shed new light by which to read Exodus and the Pentateuch, and that the arguments here are not only plausible, but persuasive.

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